

**Security Council**

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Identical letters dated 27 August 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Over the past 50 days, more than 4,000 rockets have been shot at Israel from the Gaza Strip. Thousands of these rockets were launched from densely populated areas. Hamas is committing a double war crime — first by using Palestinian civilians as human shields and second by intentionally targeting innocent Israeli civilians.

Deadly rockets were fired daily from launch pads located in hospitals, mosques and schools in Gaza only to explode in homes, synagogues and kindergartens in Israel. While Israel has been using missile defence to protect its civilians, Hamas has been using civilians to protect its missiles.

Hamas deliberately embeds its military operations in residential areas with the clear intention of using its own people, including women and children, as protection. One does not have to look any further than Hamas' own combat manual on urban warfare to see how the terror organization has institutionalized its disregard for human life. Its combat strategy guidelines explicitly instruct terrorists to use civilians as human shields. This is not a new tactic — it has been the *modus operandi* of Hamas each and every time it has waged hostilities against Israel.

Evidence of this criminal strategy is mounting and the examples are too numerous to count. Hamas has routinely fired from schools, playgrounds and hotels, as described below:

- On 8 July, a rocket was fired from within the El' Azhar Islamic College
- On 14 July, an M-75 rocket was launched from a children's playground located in the neighbourhood of Shuja'iya
- On 1 August, a rocket was fired from within the Al-Shati refugee camp, near the Al Mashtal hotel, where many journalists were staying

And, as if exploiting civilian infrastructure was not horrific enough, Hamas repeatedly called on the civilian population of Gaza to disregard Israeli warnings and threatened them not to evacuate the areas from which Hamas launched its attacks. Such statements were made on 10 July by the Palestinian Ministry of the Interior and on 15 July by the Head of the Hamas refugee department. Hamas also used its official media channels to actively encourage Palestinian civilians to act as human shields, turning Israel Defense Forces (IDF) warnings of impending strikes into opportunities for sacrificing their own civilians.



Despite the fact that the United Nations has acknowledged these war crimes, virtually no action has been taken. In an interview to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, John Ging, Director of the Operational Division at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, admitted: "Yes, the armed groups in Gaza are firing their rockets into Israel from the vicinity of UN facilities and residential areas. Absolutely." Additionally, a report of that Office from July 2014 clearly states: "Such practice severely endangers the lives of Palestinian civilians residing in these areas, in addition to the Israeli civilians targeted."

I report these events and findings to you with grave concern. The Security Council must never remain silent when terrorist organizations exploit civilians to advance their own radical extremist agendas.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ron **Prosor**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative